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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

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## Soviet Intentions and Activities in Southern Africa

Summary

Much of Moscow's regional diplomacy is intended to portray the USSR as the natural ally of anti-apartheid forces and to discredit the West for its alleged support of South Africa. This effort is complemented by extensive propaganda and active measures. The Soviets have indicated a willingness to discuss southern Africa in bilateral forums with the United States, primarily as a means to ensure Soviet participation in any future regional diplomatic process.

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The USSR is probably satisfied that its position as the dominant non-African influence in Mozambique--built over the last decade through provision of extensive military, economic, and political backing--is secure in spite of the death of President Samora Machel and the continuing insurgent challenge. We believe the Soviets will continue providing arms and advisory support to Maputo at or near current levels, but that they will avoid incurring increased costs or taking escalatory steps that might provoke South African military retaliation. The USSR's relations with Zimbabwe have improved

This Memorandum was prepared for Michael Armacost, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, by [redacted] Office of Soviet Analysis. Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to the Chief, Third World Activities Division, SOVA, [redacted].

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[redacted]

significantly over the past year, which saw Prime Minister Mugabe's first official visit to Moscow. We anticipate continued gradual improvement in relations over the next several months, including the possible conclusion of an arms agreement. Soviet ties to Zambia have cooled since 1982 and, while a military relationship continues at low levels, Moscow has little, if any, political influence in Lusaka. The Soviets have no diplomatic relations with or presence in Malawi. [redacted]

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### Objectives in Southern Africa

Southern Africa has become an increasingly important object of Soviet attention over the last few years, [redacted]

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we

[redacted] believe that Moscow's short term objectives in the region include:

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- o Consolidating the Marxist-Leninist regimes of Angola and Mozambique in the face of serious insurgent challenges and cutting off outside support for the insurgent groups.
- o Improving bilateral ties with key frontline states to expand Soviet presence and offset Western influence.
- o Injecting the USSR into any regional diplomatic process.
- o Exploiting the apartheid issue for propaganda purposes.

Over the longer run, we believe that Moscow's main goals are the promotion of a SWAPO-led government in Namibia and of a pro-Soviet, ANC-dominated regime in South Africa. Soviet officials have indicated that they do not believe that they will achieve these objectives for at least a decade. [redacted]

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### Activity in Key Countries

#### Mozambique

The Soviets and their East European and Cuban allies have established a broad range of political, military, intelligence and economic relations with Mozambique since 1975. In our judgment, much of the activity of Soviet allies in this effort is prompted and in certain cases directed by the USSR. [redacted]

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Security Assistance. The cornerstone of the relationship is military aid, with the Soviet Bloc supplying over \$1 billion worth of equipment, including Mig-21 fighters, MI-25 attack helicopters, and T-54 tanks, along with over 1,500 military advisers and technicians. The Soviet military advisory group has been directly involved in the planning, training, intelligence, and logistics functions associated with Maputo's operations against RENAMO insurgents, while the Cubans have also helped with intelligence and the

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[redacted]

operation of sophisticated systems such as SAM missiles. The USSR, Cuba, and East Germany have also assisted in the development of Maputo's security [redacted]

[redacted]

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In return, the Soviets have gained limited access to Mozambican air and naval facilities that supports their commercial fishing activity, intelligence gathering, and occasional naval activity in the region. Mozambique also provided a convenient conduit for Soviet military aid to the African National Congress before Maputo signed the Nkomati Accord with South Africa in 1984.

[redacted] Mozambique has restricted ANC use of its territory since then, but we believe that the USSR would like to reopen this channel if it would not involve provoking severe South African retaliation. [redacted]

[redacted]

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Economic Assistance. The Soviet Bloc has concluded economic agreements with Mozambique that have extended over \$500 million in credits. While relatively limited in comparison with Mozambique's enormous aid requirements, Soviet Bloc economic assistance is concentrated in key sectors--agricultural development, mining, and petroleum supply. There are about 2,000 East Bloc and Cuban economic advisers and technicians in Mozambique, and almost 7,000 Mozambicans have received technical training in the USSR, Eastern Europe and Cuba. [redacted]

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Political Links. On the political side, the USSR has cultivated extensive party-to-party ties with FRELIMO, and Mozambique is one of four African states that have a Treaty of Friendship and cooperation with the Soviet Union. However, the Soviets were not able in 1984 to prevent the late President Samora Machel--who was disenchanted with the levels of Soviet economic assistance and the inability of Soviet military aid to protect Mozambique from South African incursions and the growing RENAMO insurgency--from signing the Nkomati Pact with Pretoria and looking to the West for economic and military aid. The Kremlin indicated its unhappiness with the move, and bilateral ties seemed to cool somewhat during 1985. However, the Soviets did not reduce their military backing for Machel and concluded several new economic agreements. The Soviets apparently believed that Maputo would not obtain what it was seeking from South Africa and the West and that they would retain their position as the dominant non-African external influence in Mozambique. [redacted]

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The Kremlin has probably been reasonably satisfied with developments in its relations with Mozambique in 1986. Zimbabwean intervention against RENAMO took some of the pressure off of Soviet and Cuban military advisers, and Maputo's relations with South Africa have deteriorated. At the same time, insurgent pressure has kept Maputo's need for Soviet arms at a high level, and we believe that military aid was a central topic of Machel's discussions with General Secretary Gorbachev and other top Soviet leaders during his March trip to the USSR. [redacted]

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[REDACTED]

The Soviet central press reported the events surrounding Machel's death in an October plane crash in relatively straightforward fashion, avoiding direct accusations of South African complicity in the accident. However, Moscow did show sensitivity to Pretoria's explanation that the Soviet pilot's error caused the crash, in the aftermath of which the Soviet press suggested that South Africa might be trying to cover up its own involvement. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Machel's death in October almost certainly concerned the Kremlin, which emphasized the need for political stability in the aftermath of the plane crash. However, the Soviets probably see President Chissano as a known quantity who is likely to continue Machel's overall policies, including a Marxist-Leninist course at home and good relations with the USSR abroad, by virtue of both his personal inclinations and the fact that he must accommodate Marxist hardliners within the FRELIMO leadership. We believe the Soviets will continue to supply arms, advisers, and economic aid to Mozambique at or near present levels. At the same time, Moscow is likely to avoid incurring increased costs there and probably will continue to rule out major increases in military aid or the introduction of Cuban combat troops to avoid provoking South African military retaliation. [REDACTED]

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### Zimbabwe

Through late 1985, Soviet relations with Zimbabwe were correct but generally cool despite Prime Minister Mugabe's professed commitment to Marxism-Leninism and his vocal anti-imperialist stance in the international arena. Mugabe's suspicions of Moscow's intentions in southern Africa and of the USSR's close ties to his bitter rival Joshua Nkomo both before and after independence in 1980 acted as a barrier to improved relations. More recently, though, Mugabe seems to have overcome at least some of his concerns about the Soviets, and his perceived need for arms to defend against South Africa and equip Zimbabwean troops in Mozambique has increased markedly. The USSR, meanwhile, apparently decided finally to forgo the option of supporting Nkomo, setting the stage for warmer relations with Harare. [REDACTED]

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Over the past several months, Soviet-Zimbabwean relations have improved considerably:

- o In December 1985, Mugabe made his first official visit to the USSR, where he met with Gorbachev and signed framework agreements on economic, technical, and party-to-party cooperation.
- o The two sides exchanged a series of military delegations during 1986 as a follow-up to general discussions on military assistance during Mugabe's

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visit. [REDACTED]

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o [REDACTED] Harare will buy six civil aircraft from the USSR, cancelling a contract already signed with a US firm for similar planes.

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o The Soviets and Cubans gave Zimbabwe financial assistance and logistical support for the September Non-Aligned Movement summit conference in Harare, [REDACTED] The Soviet press also gave extensive coverage to Mugabe in his role as chairman of the conference.

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We anticipate continued gradual improvement in bilateral relations over the next year. Mugabe will probably proceed carefully on arms purchases from the USSR to gauge South African reaction and to avoid, to the extent possible, offending his Western economic benefactors. Moreover, he is still wary of Soviet attempts to interfere in Zimbabwean internal politics, as evidenced by this fall's expulsion of two Soviet journalists involved in espionage activities. However, we believe that a deal will be concluded over the next few months in which Harare is likely to buy, among other things, badly needed air defense equipment. For their part, the Soviets will probably take time to evaluate the sincerity of Mugabe's interest in better relations before making a major commitment to Harare, but they will be alert to opportunities that they can exploit to improve ties. We expect Moscow to try to play on Mugabe's fears of South Africa, his intention to support the FRELIMO regime in Mozambique against RENAMO, and his intensifying suspicions of the United States to promote closer relations with Zimbabwe. [REDACTED]

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### Zambia

In the mid-1970's Zambia began to move away from its generally pro-Western orientation towards improved ties with the Soviet Bloc, a result of Lusaka's support for revolutionary movements such as SWAPO, the ANC, and ZAPU in Rhodesia, and of President Kaunda's unhappiness with Western unwillingness to supply the arms he wanted to protect against Rhodesian and South African intervention. The Soviets exploited this trend by supplying over \$200 million in military equipment between 1979 and 1982, including Mig-21s and T-54 tanks, and by concluding a number of economic and cultural agreements with Lusaka. Also, East Germany aided Zambia's security service. These developments, and Zambian rhetoric on international issues at the time, suggested that it was moving in the direction of a "progressive non-alignment" that promised increased opportunities for Soviet influence. [REDACTED]

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The momentum in Soviet-Zambian relations faded by the mid-1980s, however, before Moscow was able to establish any significant influence in Lusaka.

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First, the drop in world copper prices heightened Zambia's need for Western aid and investment. In addition, the Zambians found Soviet technical and economic aid ill-suited to their needs. Finally, Soviet military equipment turned out to be difficult to operate and costly to maintain. The US Embassy in Lusaka reported that Zambian leaders became disenchanted with Soviet inability to solve Zambia's economic and security problems and moved back toward the West.

Over the past year the Soviets have tried to appeal to Kaunda's desire to play a leading role in the anti-apartheid campaign of the Frontline States and sent Deputy Foreign Minister Adamishin to Lusaka in August to deliver a message from Gorbachev. However, there are no signs they have offered Zambia new economic or military assistance. Kaunda this fall offered some praise for Moscow's anti-apartheid position and disarmament initiatives,

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the Zambian Air Force experienced serious problems with Soviet-supplied equipment over the last year and that Lusaka has begun to phase out some systems, including Soviet communications gear.

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We see little prospect for meaningful improvement in Soviet-Zambian relations as long as Lusaka believes that good ties to the West are vital to its economic survival. However, a sharp rise in South African military pressure could lead Lusaka to seek another round of arms purchases, a situation that could again open an opportunity for the USSR.

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### Malawi

The USSR has no diplomatic relations with or presence in Malawi, and,

the Soviets maintain contact with the exile opposition Socialist League of Malawi (LESOMA), but there is no indication to date of concrete Soviet support for the Libyan-backed group.

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### Regional and International Activity

Most of Moscow's regional diplomacy is directed toward portraying the USSR as the natural ally of anti-apartheid forces and discrediting the West for its alleged collaboration with Pretoria. This was exemplified by Deputy Foreign Minister Adamishin's swing through southern Africa earlier this year with messages of support for the Frontline states, by Moscow's vocal backing of the Non-Aligned Movement's positions condemning the West for its position on South Africa, and by Soviet encouragement of Third World anti-apartheid moves at the United Nations. This diplomacy is backed up by a wide range of active measures in southern Africa and elsewhere intended to reinforce the picture of supposed Western collusion with South Africa. These efforts include:

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- o Periodic placements in African newspapers of articles alleging US-South African cooperation on nuclear armaments.
- o The organization by Soviet front groups of conferences designed to use Third World anti-apartheid sentiment to attract support for the USSR.
- o Frequent efforts by Soviet diplomats and front organization representatives to influence the activities of United Nations anti-apartheid organizations and conferences. [REDACTED]

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Moscow has been willing to discuss southern African issues on a bilateral basis with the United States, and Soviet academicians and diplomats have occasionally floated proposals for some type of US-Soviet sponsored conference or peace process on southern Africa. In making these approaches, however, the Soviets have been vague on the form such cooperation might take and have not been willing to address several issues of concern to the US, such as the role of UNITA in an Angola settlement. In our view, Moscow's main objective in making such proposals is to ensure its participation in any regional diplomatic process that may emerge down the road. The USSR presumably also hopes that engaging the United States in discussion on this and other regional issues might influence US domestic debates on support for insurgents fighting pro-Soviet governments. [REDACTED]

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## Soviet Bloc and Cuban Presence – 1985/86

Country	Soviet Diplomats	Soviet Military Advisers	East European Military Advisers	Cuban Military Advisers	Soviet Economic Advisers	East European Economic Advisers	Cuban Economic Advisers
Mozambique	95	800	A	800	800	600	600
Zimbabwe	50	0	0	0	0	305	0
Zambia	50	100	A	0	200	115	10
Malawi	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

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Soviet Bloc and Cuban Aid – 1985  
(million USD)

Country	Soviet Military Deliveries	East European Military Deliveries	Cuban Military Deliveries	Soviet Economic Aid Drawn	East European Economic Aid Drawn	Cuban Economic Aid Drawn
Mozambique	125	0.2	0	54	24.3	0
Zimbabwe	0	1	0	0	0	0
Zambia	B	0	0	0.2	5.6	0
Malawi	0	0	0	0	0	0

A - Information not available

B - Spare parts, undetermined value

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SUBJECT: Soviet Intentions and Activities in Southern Africa

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